



Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies, and Aid

Samantha Nutt

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Damned Nations is the brilliant distillation of Samantha Nutt's observations over the course of fifteen years providing hands-on care in some of the world's most violent flashpoints.

Combining original research with her personal story, it is a deeply thoughtful meditation on war as it is being waged around the world against millions of civilians -- primarily women and children. Samantha's boundless energy, dedication, and compassion shine through on every page as she lays out real, lasting solutions to these problems and shows how to move beyond outdated notions of charity towards a more progressive, inclusive, and respectful world view.

Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies, and Aid Details

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From Reader Review Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies, and Aid for online ebook

Andrew Lee says

This book appeals to the truth seeker and conspiracy theorist's heart. I couldn't put this book down from start to finish.

Samantha writes in a simple, easy-to-read, yet eloquent style. Her stories are heart wrenching, and she follows up her shared experiences very smoothly with hard data and facts to support those experiences.

Her arguments are undeniable. Her message is one that must be heard.

Phoenix says

Second, Do No Harm

Passionate, intimate and moving, Nutt takes us to Somalia, the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia, Haiti and Sri Lanka and Burundi providing an insider's look at the state of humanitarian aid in these troublesome regions of the world. Naively most would believe that the aura of saintliness that aid organizations project protects them from being drawn into the conflict itself, but this is far from the case. Alas good intentions may not only be ineffective but in many ways can lead to a prolongation and even a worsening of conditions.

On the ground there are a multitude of issues. One is the lack of good governance on the ground in what are failed states. Aid organizations (including the UN) have to negotiate with the social structure that exists, which often include supplying, negotiating with, and turning a blind eye to war lords, profiteers, corrupt officials, and drugged out child soldiers. Another is that aid organizations are not that much different from corporations in that they compete more than cooperate with each other both for funding but for share of mind on the ground. Thirdly, first world aid tends to favour visible "high velocity" short term goals rather than underlying problems as these tend to attract more donations. In many cases aid can be counterproductive - for example donating clothes in Africa has destroyed the local garment industry; more than one agency offers the gift of a goat - except that goats tear away the roots of plants which leads to increased desertification. Orphanages and adoption? In places such as Haiti number of the children are simply abandoned by their parents - strengthening societal infrastructure so that parents can both plan for and raise children would be preferable, though the situation is made more complex in war zones. Nutt also targets voluntourism in as much as it is often used to make the first world participant feel better about themselves, but involvement can sideswipe both the local labour economy and the local decision making processes that should lead to self sufficiency. Short term attachments may do more harm than good.

Nutt also inveighs against corporations who also need to deal the same corrupt infrastructure and wishes that here were a Kimberly style process for the rare minerals necessary for the manufacture of high end electronics coming from places such as the Congo. Refined metals are not as easily fingerprinted as diamonds. She also has guarded praise for aid distributed under military programs but wonders how sustainable the approach can be.

Outlining the problem is one thing - coming up with solutions is another. There is more than enough heartbreak - on more than one occasion Nutt recounts being prevented from suicidal attempts at rescue,

which would likely have resulted in the death of the people with her as well. She also tells of the death of several local activists at the hands of insurgents. The book with some guidelines for donors but stops short of a definitive rubric - nor should one have expected anything but partial answers to such complex problems.

Recommended.

Billie Trahan says

I found it nice and educational and full of stories that really broke or touched my heart. I enjoyed reading it. My rating is lower because I did find it quite repetitive towards the end and rather biased as well in terms of the author's interpretation of the world's problems and how to solve them. There seemed to be some strong political beliefs coloring her perspective; so while I feel like I learned a lot from this book, I also don't agree with all of the author's conclusions and wasn't fond of the writing style as the book went on.

Amara says

Although I think Nutt should've included some sort of disclaimer concerning the quite macabre and lurid details (as it can be triggering); I understand why she had no problem providing the reader with such a vivid understanding of the mass atrocities people in war are subjected to.

Loved the sassiness at points throughout the book. Well written and informative. Being a sceptic when it comes to the issue of foreign aid, I will say this book allowed for me to pause, think and ask myself questions. I particularly commend her on her unapologetic schooling on "voluntourism" and its negative effects. Although I did have to side eye her a little when it came to the cover of the book after reading the chapter on 'voluntourism.' Found it a little hypocritical but doesn't negate the profoundness of what she said in the chapter.

The quote/conversation she has with one of the women at the end of the book was chilling and profound. I closed the book with goosebumps.

Intense but open continuous dialogue is definitely needed when it comes to figuring out this quagmire called foreign aid/humanitarian assistance.

Carly Drake says

I had the pleasure of listening to Samantha Nutt at a conference in Calgary this past January. She was lovely, and had so many great things to say about community development that I didn't hesitate to buy her book and have her sign it while she was there. I wasn't disappointed with this read - Samantha is a tough, seasoned veteran of the development world. It's no surprise that her writing was jam-packed with pertinent information. There were some tedious passages, but overall I was gripped. The colourful sections detailing her field work, as well as her critiques of the aid world, were the best parts of "Damned Nations." She really made me question a lot of the assumptions/opinions I have about this field, and I appreciate her honesty and grit. I'd recommend this book to anyone even remotely interested in charity/aid/development.

Betty says

I bought this book on the advice of a friend who shares my interest in international women's issues. Damned Nations fully lived up to expectations, providing not only insight but turning into one of the few books in recent memory that I've read without interruption. Dr. Nutt kept me engaged from the start, and my ebook is peppered with highlighted passages. Bravo! I will surely continue to read her work.

Ashley Stein says

Eye opening and informative

I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in working for international NGO's or getting involved in humanitarian aid. It is very informative and written beautifully.

Michelle says

Very eye opening and thought provoking.

Jill Mackin says

An exceptional account of her humanitarian work in war torn areas of the world.

Janeschmidt says

Simply put, everyone in the developed world should read this book. While it is pretty dense, it is very readable and short enough that most would be able to get through it with a small amount of determination. It was a transformational read in that it made me re-evaluate how I approach charitable giving and gave me enough talking points to be able to intelligently discuss the pros and cons of donating to large organizations.

In short, Nutt's thesis is that charitable donations and federal international development funding, by and large, is more about making the donating body or person feel better about themselves rather than making the much needed difference that the money could be put toward. In terms of federal funding, the money is watered down by filtering it through large organizations like the UN who take a significant cut for administration. In terms of individual giving, contributing to programs such as the adopt-a-child or specific village necessitates unnecessary accounting of the use of the money (that could be otherwise put toward something other than making the donator feel warm and fuzzy) and creates turmoil on the ground when it is seen as preferential treatment of one specific person or place. Most compelling is her take on "voluntourism" and the damage that it can cause once the individual is finished with their brief tour of duty, and the reality that it is actually taking away economic opportunities for locals. She also encourages you to look into your own investments to determine to what extent you are contributing to large arms dealers. If you are an Ontario teacher, you are one of the world's biggest investors. A tough pill to swallow.

Not short on solutions, Nutt advises readers of things to consider when choosing where to donate funds. While she is the co-founder of Warchild, she does not use this as an opportunity to simply solicit funds for her charity. Rather she gives guidelines and sources for the reader to investigate themselves. Her basic rules of thumb are repeated often - ensure the organization is small in scale, focusses on women and children, and is committed to SUSTAINABLE and long term education/nutrition initiatives with the emphasis being on education to promote self sufficiency. Donators are encouraged to think with their heads instead of their hearts. This book made me cry ... there are terrible places in the world where people endure hell on earth everyday and she has seen it time and again. Nutt made me realize that getting a stupid card in the mail showing how "my goat" is making life for a particular family better is not making a significant difference at all.

Read this book. And then encourage everyone you know to read it.

❁ Susan G says

<https://ayearofbooksblog.com/2017/01/...>

“My aim is simply to introduce a process of critical reflection considering our own actions and deeds, and how, collectively, we are so often implicated in horrific acts of violence, around the world while our personal interventions rarely do more than maintain the status quo”.

After hearing Samantha Nutt Speak at the University of Guelph Leadership Call to Action Event, I couldn't wait to read my signed copy of Damned Nations: Greed, Guns, Armies & Aid. The book, like her talk, makes a reader stop and reflect on the abuse, rape, murder and trauma taking place in war torn countries and how to best make a meaningful difference. My review will be short as I encourage readers to get their hands on a copy and read it themselves.

“Sustainable development is an iterative process, one that questions itself and is constantly evolving. A successful project puts communities and organizations at the centre of that process in the search for answers”.

The opening chapter describes her time in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo where she received the news that her husband (Eric Hoskins, the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care) had been detained. Once he arrived back at the hotel they ended up in the midst of shelling and gunfire leading to evacuation. It is hard to imagine how terrifying it must be to be in that situation yet Samantha continues to travel to war torn countries.

In almost 2 decades of helping in war torn countries, Samantha has witnessed death, heard devastating stories from survivors and put herself into many dangerous situations. She has spent time understanding what communities need and how to provide sustainable assistance despite the politics of war and humanitarian aid.

“There is great resilience, courage and strength in countries in which none ought to exist; communities defiled by war, famine, rape, oppression, or extreme poverty. The young men and women maturing in the midst of such violence and hardship can, in less than a generation, become a resource for their communities through education and skills training for a fraction of the cost of our ongoing militarization”

Readers may be asking what can they do to help? Samantha suggests ongoing donations that help organizations provide ongoing, sustainable support that will lead to the organization becoming redundant. She challenges readers to learn, educate themselves and take action through voting and participating in civil

action. She suggests that it is important to not only respond to natural disasters for crisis relief but to donate after the imminent crisis is over to support long-term assistance. She highlights the importance to research organizations and find ones that work closely with communities and listen to local needs while they work together to make improvements. These are just a few suggestion and she challenges readers to review the resources at the end of the book.

I am thankful to have met Samantha Nutt. I learned so much from her engaging talk and from reading this book. When I see those commercials on TV which tug at your heart strings, I will reflect on the importance of education to help war torn communities.

Suzanne Arcand says

What a righteous, passionate, heartbreaking book! Samantha Nutt doesn't pull any punches as she guides us on a "guilt trip" through "Damned Nations." One through which I travelled slowly since it was arduous and enlightening but also humorous at times.

In the chapter one, "Invitation to War," she takes us to Somalia in the '90s by relating her experience as a naïve twenty-five years old. Her description of Somalia is both vivid "The first thing about Somalia to confront visitors is the heat. It beats down from above and radiates back from below, turning foreign cheeks a blistering crimson and making the simple act of breathing an effort" and frightening "Gangs of disaffected young men armed with rocket launchers and Kalashnikov rifles owned the streets from the backs of their rusted-out Toyota Hiluxes." I wanted to scream at her, "Get out of there!" and she did but not before living through a close call with rape, torture and death. It sets the pattern for the rest of the book where factual information is illustrated with personal stories that touched my heart.

Because she doesn't just offer us a travelogue to exotic locations, she makes us understand that we are not innocent bystander.

Chapter 2, "Chaos Incorporated," finds her in Congo, "... a country with many riches. Riches people fight to control, and which are the source of much suffering." She knows that a consumer boycott of mobile phones is unlikely to happen or help and her suggestions are more pragmatic: abolishing illicit mineral trade and putting the onus on the mining industry. We are the inheritors of colonialism and that our electronic devices come at a very high cost for the Congolese.

Next chapter "Winning Wars, Losing Peace" is set in Iraq where we meet Margaret Hassan, a British national married to an Iraqi, director of CARE International in Iraq, the first of strong heroic women who speak their mind. In a scene that would be humorous if it weren't pathetic, an American general ask humanitarian organization's insights into the psychology and needs of the Iraqi people instead of addressing the Iraqi citizen directly.

Chapter 4, "Paved with good intentions," demonstrates how most of the aids goes to emergency relief and how the different NGOs compete for our dollars.

In Chapter 5, "Pack your Bags We're Going on a Guilt Trip" we meet Mariam, a midwife, another strong fierce woman. Here Samantha Nutt describes the mass marketing of misery—poverty porn—, the staging of abject poverty, the sponsoring of individual child, volunteer tourism, she explains it as "vestiges of neo-colonialism" cloaked in altruism and proposes us more effective course of action.

In chapter 6, "A Just Cause," she opens by citing George Orwell "During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act." Damned Nations was written in 2011 but this quote is more pertinent than ever. She presents measures which she thinks are worth supporting and calls us to action in "The First of Many Steps: What You Can Do." It's badly needed hopeful chapter.

With her book, the author nudges us into being more compassionate and into doing the right thing, if only occasionally and according to our means. She doesn't want our stupid compassion which could make the situation worse instead of better. She clearly explains the difference between humanitarian assistance and development aid and why we should keep a portion of or aid dollars for the later. She asks us not only to support those bigger organizations that attract the manna after every catastrophe but also to contribute to the smaller NGOs that help the developing countries and work with them to put in place effective measures.

Do not invest in armament is another of her admonition. I didn't know that "... Canada, which is among the world's top ten arms exporters, has had one of the lowest international Arms Transparency ratings among industrialized economies and that "The Canada Pension Plan ... holds more than \$200 million in investments in twenty-four of the world's top one hundred arms-producing companies."

This is a strong book and a short one that doesn't take long to read and Mrs. Nutt is too passionate to be boring. Put down your distractions for a few hours and learn, vividly, how our fellow human beings suffer and what we can do effectively to help them. Not because you feel sorry for them but because it's the right thing to do.

I'm not giving this book five stars because I never give five stars on first reading. I want them to pass the test of time. I wish that Damned Nations will not, that in a few years, it will seem unnecessary and anachronistic but I am not hopeful.

CynthiaA says

Wow. A whole lot of information to digest -- much of it extremely sobering. But much of it helpful, insightful and hopeful, too. I won't look at "aid" the same ever again. I will be spending a lot of time over the next few days and weeks thinking about this, digesting all her info, and deciding what I personally am going to do about it. Thank you, Samantha Nutt. This was a brave and important work.

Lisa Faye says

As someone who works in development, this is the book that I wish so many of my friends who don't work in development would read. It's easy to read, short, and has a nice blend of personal stories and facts. It comes with a Canadian perspective and could really help some people I know to think more critically about the Canadian government and Canadian mining companies abroad. I also think that she really outlines the best way to give - not a 1 month volunteer stint, not your second hand toys, not a donation to hurricane relief, but just regular monthly donations to an organisation that you have really researched and feel strongly about. She also notes that NGO overheads are a must and that we shouldn't look to donate somewhere that has no overheads, but that we should be choosy.

What I don't like as much is her blanket dismissal of larger NGO's - especially when she works with War Child, which is a larger NGO. Also, since I think about this stuff a lot, the book felt a little simple to me. I think my star rating is more about how I think the book would be very informative and readable for people outside the field; as for people in the field, you probably know most of this stuff already.

Wendy Caron says

I made the mistake of reading this book on the train, with no kleenex in my purse. Not that this is one of those books that plays-up the horrors of war and manipulates your emotions; rather, Nutt's honest, straight-forward story-telling of her personal involvement in war-torn countries lays it all on the line evoking an honest, unbidden reaction of tears. Nutt provided a balanced mixture of anecdotes and information, the former reinforcing and illustrating the latter. It was impossible not to read the book in the context of current circumstances in Syria and of course, in terms of the efforts of CWF Tanzania. As an organization we have certainly evolved from our initial approach thanks in no small part to Julie's immersion into the realm of global health but we still have a ways to go. Exposing ourselves to people who know, humanitarians in the field and to SASCO/locals will certainly help. I also couldn't read the book without the ever-present thought that the work Samantha Nutt is doing is Julie's calling and in all likelihood how she will use her MD degree which was humbling, awe-inspiring and yes, a little terrifying.

This book should be read by anyone who wants to become aware of how our actions (individually and nationally) affect/effect things globally. Simply stated, when you know better, you do better. We take so much for granted. The last line of Nutt's book will stay with me forever - "Now that I know how to write my own name, I'm going to learn how to write my son's name." (Nadya,22, Displaced People's Camp, Darfur). So much hope in the face of the atrocities suffered; a testament to the human spirit.
